



Volume 42 #8 May 2009

NCW Audubon Weekend in the Methow June 6 -7

by Teri J Pieper

North Central Washington Audubon Society has a large geographic area, covering four counties – Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan and Ferry – and a diverse membership. Last year the board decided to explore the farther reaches of our region and get to know more of our members. For our first foray we will have a weekend-long field trip to explore the Methow Valley, see some of its birds, learn about some its conservation challenges and opportunities and get to know our extended membership. We (the board) hope that this will be the first of an annual series of visits to learn from others and explore areas around our region.

The field trip will be June 6th and 7th. We will meet at 10:00 am in Winthrop Saturday with a half day trip to explore conservation easements held by the Methow Conservancy.

Steve Bondi, Stewardship Director for the Conservancy, will be our guide. The Methow Conservancy likes to define stewardship as ‘ongoing care for the land to benefit both the human and natural communities of the Methow Valley’. Steve says “Good stewardship requires getting to know the land as well as getting to know the landowners and their

concerns, interests, and experiences with the land. Landowners in the Methow Valley care about their land most and want to do everything they can to be good stewards of it”. Depending on the weather, we may visit shrub-steppe hillsides or riparian sites or perhaps a combination of both. Bring a lunch, water, sturdy shoes and appropriate clothes for the weather. We plan to meet at the Town Trailhead in Winthrop at 10:00 and return by 4:00.

Saturday evening we will regroup at 6:00 at the Senior Center, located in the Twisp Community Center for a potluck and presentation. Methow Conservancy staff will present the ‘big picture’ of the organization and its work in the valley. Conservancy easements protect certain conservation values including wildlife

habitats and also rich agricultural lands and scenic landscapes, among others.

Sunday morning Don McIvor, Science Coordinator for Audubon Washington, will lead us on a morning bird walk to one of the particularly birdy areas of the valley, perhaps a stop on the Cascade Loop Birding Trail. Don coordinates

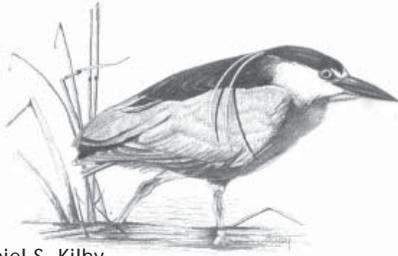
our state’s Important Bird Area program for the National Audubon Society and also works with the Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program and is researching the impact climate change has on Washington State’s birds.

Following the bird walk, the board will meet at the Twisp River Pub at noon. Any interested Audubon members are welcome to attend the board meeting. We would like to know how many folks are planning to attend so if you could RSVP to Mark Oswood or Teri Pieper, that would be much appreciated. As we get closer to June, we will let attendees know more about the planned field trips and what to expect regarding the weather and other conditions. Jeanie Garrity has volunteered to coordinate the Saturday evening potluck so let her know what you can bring. Contact info for all of us can be found on page two of this newsletter.

There are many accommodations around the Methow Valley including campgrounds, RV parks, motels, b&b’s, and resorts. For a list please see http://www.methownet.com/lodging_and_dining.html or contact the Winthrop Chamber of Commerce at 888-463-8469 or <http://www.winthropwashington.com/> or the Twisp Chamber of Commerce at 509-997-2926 or <http://www.twispinfo.com>.



Mountain Bluebird
photo by Teri J Pieper



Daniel S. Kilby

North Central Washington Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, is dedicated to furthering the knowledge and the conservation of the environment of North Central Washington, our Nation, and the World.

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Do you find that Spring is the busiest time of year? What with spring cleaning, gardening, vacations, not to mention spring migration and all the birds to see, how can a person get a lick of work done? (She said as she struggled to finish the Phlox by her own self-determined deadline.) A friend reminded me that she had hummingbirds the first week of April last year and wasn't I late getting my feeders out the second week? Luckily, the hummers did not have her old calendar in hand and arrived another week later, at my house anyway. So far we are getting Rufous and Calliope and maybe Black-chinned. Other new visitors at our place this spring are/were three Wild Turkeys. Now there are two, on nests. While we enjoy seeing these odd looking, non-native, gallinaceous birds, we are afraid of the havoc they might wreak on our small and soon to be larger garden beds. That's another warning from my friend. It seems that the messy turkeys took over her yard, deck and bird feeders. The House Wrens just arrived this week and promptly dispatched a pair or Tree Swallows from a favored nest box. Within days, the box was completely full of sticks. We hope there were not already swallow eggs in the box. As you can imagine, our life is full of drama and this is just from the birds! Many thanks to Gloria Piper Roberson for a new batch of haiku. See them sprinkled around this issue of the Phlox. And thanks to our other creative newsletter contributors. Also many thanks to those of you serving on the board and even more thanks to those of you ready to step up to assist with board duties in the near future. June 6 and 7 will find NCW Audubon members getting to know each other in the Methow Valley. We are looking forward to seeing many of you from the four corners of our region. If you are making lodging reservations, you had best do it soon as I just learned that is the weekend of the Liberty Bell High School graduation. The next edition of the Phlox marks the last of our Audubon year. Instead of coming out near the first of June; look for it towards the middle or end of the month, a summer edition if you will.

North Central Washington Audubon Society Membership Form

Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Nine Issues \$15

Donation: I would like to support NCW Audubon's programs of education and conservation. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____

Membership to NCW Audubon Society Chapter and National Audubon Society (NAS), includes one year Wild Phlox, \$20
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Chapter Code C9ZY100Z

Audubon Needs You

by Mark Oswood
NCW Audubon President

Needed — YOU! Your chapter needs people who like birds, frogs, and plants; who think that the Outside is part of our Inside; who want to help make North Central Washington a great place to live (until the next Ice Age). NCWAS is an all-volunteer organization so our vital organs are people, giving of their time.

We need to have officers and board members 'on board' (so to speak) for the next Audubon year (2009-10). New officers and board members take up duties at our annual planning meeting in late summer.

We are seeking some nominations (with concordance of the nominee) or (especially) self-nominations. We especially need individuals or pairs or groups of people that might like to work together on the following:

Organize field trips.
Organize our more-or-less monthly programs (September to May).

Coordinate our conservation mission. (Alternatively, our conservation mission could perhaps best be accomplished by having co-chairs, one from each of our four counties: Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, and Ferry).

Someone to be president-elect (will get training wheels and lots of help! a year of job-sharing could be arranged).

Please provide name, mailing address, phone number, and an e-mail address for nominations to Mark Oswood (see contact info page 2).

Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest Ready to FLY!

by Gail Roberts, Bird Fest Coordinator



Field trips galore, art walks, lectures, and great entertainment are highlights of Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest! New field trips include 2 advanced 'birding by ear' excursions, 'The Birds of Plain plus Art

and Lunch,' and the 'Jon Soest Memorial Bird Trail'. Sarvey Wildlife Center from Arlington visits again with live owls, hawks, and eagles and they will present interactive displays about their wildlife rehabilitation work.

Paul Bannick, award winning photographer, naturalist and author of the new book, *The Owl and the Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*, presents the keynote address about the topics of his book, and offers a photography workshop. He will also preside at a book signing, all on Saturday, May 16.

Families with young children will enjoy Fledgling Frolics on Saturday at Barn Beach Reserve and 'Kids: Flying Like Birds' at Front Street Park.

In categories of arts and entertainment, we have a great line-up beginning a special evening of Leavenworth Coffee House entertainment with Andre Feriante, virtuoso guitarist. 'Dancing With Birds' features lively Latin dancing at the Gazebo on Saturday afternoon--you won't be able to keep still! There

is a juried student art show and a student art workshop with professional artist Rusty Gibbs. The Art Walk returns to the upper valley, with businesses choosing an artist to sponsor, and the popular 'Photography Workshop' with Don Adams and Don Graham is on Saturday. Bird Fest will conclude with a special 'Songbird Concert' at the Canyon Wren Recital Hall, located at the Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat.

And of course, there is much, much more! If you would like to volunteer to help, please call Gail Roberts, Bird Fest Coordinator at 548-7584.

Bird Fest is a partnership of North Central Washington Audubon Society, Barn Beach Reserve, Wenatchee River Ranger District, Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce, North Cascades National Park Service Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington State Parks, and Icicle Arts. See our website: www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com for up to date information. Programs are available now at nature centers in the NW and on-line, and registration begins May 1.

NCW Audubon will be doing our traditional 'What's that Bird' activity during Bird Fest at Barn Beach Reserve.

Volunteers are needed to help with this fun-filled event. It's your chance to show kids the fun of finding (nearly) real birds in the habitat around Barn Beach. Sometimes they even find REAL birds! We provide the binoculars and field guides for our full scale hand-carved replicas of native species. You provide the fun and enthusiasm. Contact Mark Oswood to sign up! 662-9087 or moswood@nwi.net.

The Rites of Spring, in Mazama

by Bob Spiwak

Well here it is spring in the upper Methow, even if rain and/or snow is predicted for later this second-to-last-week in April. The crocuses are about through, the daffodils are blooming with more varieties in bud, tulip leaves and iris are inches tall.

For those of you in more friendly climes, this is probably "So what" commentary, but for us whose winter begins in October, ends in July and resumes in September it is big news.

The coyotes apparently have whelped, for we no longer hear their serenades of coyote love when we're out walking at dusk or dark. Even the owls, hooting or sharpening their saws are quiet. Now it is the aquatic acapella madrigal ensemble that sings to us. It is true contrapuntal music, with an ostinato of 'ribbits' counterpointed with 'garf', 'I toldya' and other non-lyrical lyrics. Who knows the numbers, he asked rhetorically, of these various frogs that find their haven in 600 feet of ponds and marshes that underline our property at the foot of Grizzly Mountain?

Enough, I can tell you that sleeping outdoors at this time is a slumber sandwiched between frog song and robin rackets. With the robins, not yet here in full force, it begins about 0500 and it startles me to realize that I have not noticed if the frogs are still at it when the robins tune up for the day.

Robins are smart birds. Other than ornithologists and other serious birders, does anybody think of them as carnivorous little beasties? Unless you are opposed to, or cannot conjure evolution, can you imagine walking through your yard and having a Robindactyle nesting in a tree above your head?

I present that scenario because last year a robin chose to nest in a maple tree, locating her mud cup domicile about twelve feet above ground. This happens to be on a golf putting course we maintain, and that means frequent

mowing and irrigation. The robin, incensed by my intrusion would swoop back and forth, frequently forcing me to duck. There were never any collisions, but there were a lot of exchanges in robin-cuss and human four letter words.

These birds are smart. The irrigation 'system' on the course involves a master line running the 200 yard length with faucets at intervals. Hoses are attached to these and moved as and where they are needed. I have seen as many as eight robins at one time either following me as I moved the hose or perching in a tree by the green I am headed for. As soon as the sprinkler begins they are all on the ground listening for moving worms.

Robins are partial to impulse sprinklers, so they can hunt worms at intervals without getting whacked or soaked by a stream of water. Some of the sprinklers have a constant water delivery. This does not stop the birds' hunting, but does require periods of *Turdus interruptus* as they run or fly out of the sprinkler to shake and flap off accumulated water.

The rites of Spring. Ah, somebody ought to write some musical piece about it.

Columbia River Lives

Banquet

The crayfish shudders
in the long, sharp pointed bill.
A kingfisher eats.

by Gloria Piper Roberson

Audubon Wenas Campout May 22 - 25

by Helen Engle

For over three decades Audubon families have been camping over Memorial Day weekend at the Wenas Creek Campground. Officially named the Hazel Wolf Wenas Creek Bird Sanctuary, it is located southwest of Ellensburg, in an 'Important Bird Area' and has been assured of protective status through management by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The free, 'primitive' campground along the north fork of Wenas Creek has exceptional

opportunities for birding, botanizing and enjoying spring in the eastern foothills of the Cascades.

There are wonderful field trips scheduled, and there will be an old-fashioned campfire in our new 'approved' firepit each evening. We do singing, story telling and recapping the sightings of the day.

Please visit Webmaster Michael Hobbs' beautiful Wenas Website to see Hazel Wolf's familiar smiling face and get lots of downloadable information about

our campout - www.wenasaudubon.org. There's a bird checklist, wildflower checklist, outline of field trips and programs, directions to the campground, and lots of photos. For people who don't 'do websites,' contact me at 253-564-3112 or hengle@iinet.com and I'll send you printed information.

Bring friends and family, and join us at Wenas Memorial Day Weekend for as many days as you want to stay.
May 22 - 25, 2009!

Volunteer Opportunities with the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust

by Sharon Lunz

Chelan-Douglas Land Trust has the following volunteer opportunities coming up in May and June. Chances are good of seeing a few nice shrub-steppe birds along the way.

May and June: Weed Control on CDLT property. Noxious weed control is one of our most important stewardship challenges. Volunteers are needed to help with hand pulling knapweed, mowing roads (tractor drivers needed), spreading biological controls, and selectively applying herbicides.

May 8th and 9th: Mule Deer Study in the Wenatchee Foothills. Volunteers are needed to lay out transects as part of a long-term study of deer habitat selection. Be prepared to walk 4-5 miles cross-country on steep, uneven terrain. Comfort with a hand-held GPS or compass is helpful.

May 14th: Distribute Cover Boards for Reptile Survey at Horse Lake Reserve. To prepare for summer reptile surveys, we will pack plywood cover boards (artificial hiding cover) to study sites.

June 4th: Reptile Surveys in the Foothills with Wenatchee Valley College Students. Find out what reptiles live in our area. Expect western fence lizards, gopher snakes, racers, and rattlesnakes, but we could find a few lesser known species. This project requires bending, lifting, digging, and you **must** be comfortable being near snakes.

To participate in any of these volunteer opportunities contact Neal Hedges, Stewardship Coordinator at CDLT, 667-9708.

Columbia River Lives

Edifice

A tillered fur piece
collects branches in the pond.
A dome for living.

by Gloria Piper Roberson

Fun and Learning Opportunities with the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust

by Sharon Lunz

In between volunteer opportunities the Land Trust also has time for fun and educational activities. Here are events planned for Spring.

May 30th: Nature Walk at Mountain Home Ridge. 9am – 12pm. CDLT invites you on a nature walk of our new 170 acre property at Mountain Home Ridge near Leavenworth led by local area botanists Helen Lau and Heather Murphy. Observe the abundant wildflowers of the region while exploring the recovery of a wildfire burned forest, microsite wetlands, and diverse shrub species. Magnificent views of the Icicle Valley and unique wildlife habitat make this a unique experience.

May 31st: Bird Walk at Horse Lake Preserve. 7:00 a.m. David and Beth St George will lead a walk through Horse Lake Preserve, a high quality upland bird habitat. This diverse habitat attracts Yellow-breasted Chats and Eastern and Western Kingbirds, among many other neo-tropical migratory species. The walk also offers panoramic views of the Columbia River and Wenatchee Valley.

June 3rd: In Celebration of Insects, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust's Greening Your Backyard Series.

7pm – 8pm. at the Tree Fruit Research Center. This workshop will celebrate insects, those six-legged animals that enrich, enhance, and contribute to our quality of life. From pollinating blossoms to aerating our soil, insects are an amazing force for gardeners, farmers, or landowners. Learn how to attract native pollinators to your backyard as well as sustainable, insect friendly practices. Bob Gillespie, an entomologist and instructor at Wenatchee Valley College, will lead the exploration into this diverse world with specimens and time in the field in this free workshop. Please register in advance.

June 20th: Clara Lake Wildflower Walk.

9:00 am. Julie Sanderson leads a hike to Clara Lake near Mission Ridge, in partnership with the Native Plant Society.

Please RSVP to CDLT at 509-667-9708 for all of these events.

The Fate of the Northern Hawk Owl

by Anya Illes

editor's note: Last month I reported that the wintering Northern Hawk Owl near Mansfield had died on the highway. Fortunately its body was found by two people from western Washington that knew how to care for it and what to do with such an important specimen. Anya Illes reported on the Tweeters email list what happened next.

We brought the bird in to the Burke Museum at the University of Washington where it was skinned and prepared. This individual was an adult male that weighed 340 grams, had a wingspan of 77 cm, and a wing chord of 22.5 cm. It had a moderate amount of fat on its body, and the back half of a deer mouse in its belly (*Peromyscus maniculatus*). The deer mouse is a native to the region.

In summary, this bird was healthy, in good shape and was hunting the local native fauna. Considering these and the many observations from the field, it was probably doing just fine at that farmhouse. And a random behavioral observation...it looks like it probably liked to take the head off its dinner before swallowing.

As far as the cause of death: definitely a powerful impact. The collarbone, breastbone and one humerus were all broken. Luckily this bird died quickly. The hawk owl was prepped by long-time Burke employee extraordinaire Chris Wood. He's prepped thousands of birds and is one of the best for the job at the Burke. One wing was removed and pinned open for the Burke's very valuable spread wing collection (spreading the wing enables much

easier study of molt patterns, feather growth and feather wear). The rest of the bird was kept whole and preserved together as a regular 'round'. The specimen ID of the bird is CSW-7375. Someday in the future when the specimen is entered into the database, you'll be able to look it up online.

This bird is MUCH appreciated by the Burke ornithology staff. Many, many folks who walked into the prep room stopped dead in their tracks when they saw the bird. The tissue collections manager was particularly excited - this is the first Washington State Northern Hawk Owl tissue in the collection. This is only the third Washington hawk owl in the collection at all. The other two are from the 1920's! Tissues were not taken and frozen back then.

Unfortunately, this bird died an early death. But fortunately, it will be valued greatly by scientists and naturalists who use the museum research collection, and will be a benefit to anyone who wants to know a little bit more about birds.

Columbia River Lives

Astray

A migrating loon
lost in the wet parking lot
trapped in a mirage.

by Gloria Piper Roberson

Great Backyard Bird Count Results

And Other Opportunities for Citizen Science in Your Own Backyard!

2009 was another record year for the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)! Birders from across the United States and Canada submitted more than 93,629 checklists during the four-day event, a 9 percent increase in checklist submissions since last year. Participants counted a record 11,550,200 individual birds representing 619 species and submitted thousands of photos of common and rare birds.

New species show up each year during the GBBC. This year we were excited by reports of the Sinaloa Wren, spotted north of the Mexican border for the first time. Xantus's Murrelet and Pink-footed Shearwater were two new oceanic species spotted from California this year. Black-billed Cuckoo, Blackpoll Warbler, and Baird's Sandpiper also made their GBBC debuts in 2009.

For a detailed summary of this year's results and to view the year's 10 most-reported species, visit the GBBC web site at www.birdcount.org. You can explore maps and photos and browse lists of participants who won GBBC prizes.

by Janis Dickinson,

Director of Citizen Science, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are pleased to announce the launch of My Yard eBird, a new online tool that allows you to keep track of the birds around your home all year round. Visit <http://ebird.org/content/myyard> to find out more information. By reporting the birds you see each day, week, or whenever you'd like, you can help us track bird populations throughout the year. It's fun, free, and good for the birds!

Now that spring has officially arrived, consider getting involved in the NestWatch project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants monitor nests and nest boxes to let scientists know when eggs are laid, when they hatch, and how many chicks fledge. It's an important way to measure the impact of climate change and other factors on breeding birds. Visit www.NestWatch.org to check it out!

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the next year's event: the 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count, February 12 – 15, 2010!

Okanogan Spring Bird-a-Thon

by Heather Findlay

The Okanogan Spring Bird-a-Thon will be Saturday May 30. We will meet at the Forest Service office parking lot at 1240 South 2nd Avenue in Okanogan at 7:00 a.m. and leave at 7:15.

Each May we visit a diverse set of habitats in the Okanogan, tallying the different bird species seen - enjoying both the birds and a spring day in the Okanogan! This year we will sweep up the Okanogan Valley, loop into the Highlands, and finish with a dip into the Sinlahekin Valley...an audacious attempt to see the birds in every bush!

For more info call Heather & Todd at 846-0475 or Gordon 422-6116, or e-mail to heather@eaglesun.net

Columbia River Lives

Quiescent

Strands of winter fog
rest on the icy river.
A napping lady.

by Gloria Piper Roberson

Birding Trails in Washington Need Your Support

A few weeks ago, the newest route of the Great Washington State Birding Trail, the Sun and Sage Loop was unveiled to the public. In the first month bird watchers purchased more than 500 maps! Birding trail fans love the art work, the abundance of local knowledge – and the fact that Audubon Washington is working for the long-term protection of birds and their habitat.

What does all this mean to you? By 2010 you'll be able to travel the seven-loop, 3,000-mile Great Washington State Birding Trail from the Pacific Ocean to Idaho, from Oregon to Canada. Along the way, you'll find all of Washington's 346 common bird species! The birding trail also provides financial incentives for local people to value and safeguard their lands and waters that birds need to survive. And finally, the birding trail offers a sustainable economic activity,

By Christi Norman, Washington State Birding Trail Director nature tourism, for the benefit of rural communities. Last year, we surveyed birding trail users about the maps – and we've followed your recommendations. We have switched to paper certified by Forest Stewardship Council and produced by a local Washington mill. We're 'walking the talk' about sustainability. But this comes with a price tag. Please consider helping with the real cost of producing these popular and important maps. Together, we can safeguard not only our birds, but also the environment that sustains us all. Navigate your web browser to this link <https://loon.audubon.org/payment/donate/WASState.html>. Our birds will thank you!

For an online gift of \$50 or more by May 15, Audubon Washington will send you a complimentary Sun and Sage Loop map!

Sax Fifth Avenue

Gloria Piper-Roberson

Fifth in a Series on Washington State Symbols

What a Dandy!

The array of color he wears, depending on the season, of course, becomes music to the eyes. Ask any of his female admirers. Even his competition would have to agree he is a fashion plate.

Take spring for example, which is when he brings out his lemon-yellow shirt, and glistening, tar-black jacket with formal tails, with a subtle hint of white across each shoulder and on the tip of each tail. He wears his jaunty black hat like Frank Sinatra. The only thing missing to his spring wardrobe

is a brass-plated cane with a gold covered lion's head!

In winter, he prefers his matching shirt and jacket of ocher with yellow shoulder patches and white stripes.

Who is his tailor?

Across his forehead, he wears a pirate's black eye patch.

Very sexy.

Is there any wonder then, that Washington, Iowa and New Jersey gave him the keys to their State?

Moreover, with a name like *Carduelis Tristis*, he can afford Sax Fifth Avenue easily.



American Goldfinch
photo by Teri J Pieper

The Wild Phlox May 2009

May 2009 Wild Phlox

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

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May 30	Okanogan Spring BirdATHon	See story on page 7
May 30	CDLT Nature Walk	At Mountain Home Ridge, see story on page 5
May 31	CDLT Bird Walk	At the Horse Lake Preserve, see story on page 5
June 3	In Celebration of Insects	Greening your Backyard with CDLT, see story on page 5
June 6 and 7	NCW Audubon in the Methow	See Page 1 for Details
June 30	Clara Lake Wildflower Hike	See story on page 5



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Visit the NCW Audubon Society website for updates on these and other events
www.ncwaudubon.org